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For further information about this booklet contact Charles Hobbs, editor, News Division, Office of Public Affairs, Room 406-A, U.S Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250 or call (202) 720-4026.

News Releases-

Release No. 0026.94
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USDA SEEKS COMMENTS ON PROPOSAL TO REVISE APRICOT STANDARDS

WASHINGTON, Jan. 10--The U.S. Department of Agriculture is seeking comments on a proposal to modify U.S. standards for grades of apricots.

Lon Hatamiya, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the apricot standards are being updated to remove or replace obsolete terminology with contemporary language that accommodates today's marketing practices and consumer preferences.

AMS currently has grade standards for about 200 commodities. These standards provide a uniform and practical language for trading. These standards are used voluntarily by those who buy and sell these products.

The proposed revision for the standards is to be published in the Jan. 11 Federal Register. Written comments, postmarked or courier-dated no later than March 11, should be sent to The Standardization Section, Fresh Products Branch, Fruit and Vegetable Division, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, Rm. 2056-S, Washington D.C. 20090-6456; tel. (202) 720-2185. Copies of the proposed rule are available from the same address.



Release No. 0027.94
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USDA ANNOUNCES BREAKTHROUGH IN RESEARCH THAT COULD PRODUCE DISEASE RESISTANT LIVESTOCK

WASHINGTON, Jan. 10--Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy announced that U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists have developed the first genetic road maps in cattle and swine that can open the way to breeding animals that are more disease resistant with a higher meat quality.

"These genetic maps will provide a basis to develop information and technology so the livestock industry can produce animals that are genetically resistant to certain diseases and on a longer term basis, to food-borne pathogens such as E. coli and Salmonella," said Espy at a news conference today with U.S. Senator Bob Kerrey of Nebraska. "I applaud the hard work of the research team."

The cattle and swine mapping studies were conducted by scientists at the Agricultural Research Service Meat Animal Research Center (MARC) in Clay Center, Neb. The MARC scientists began studying DNA sequences in livestock genes in 1985. The intensive project to map the overall genetic makeup of animals began in January, 1992.

Breeding experiments are taking place to identify specific desirable traits. The maps link hundreds of genetic markers along the chromosomes of cattle and swine. The markers are identifiable bits of DNA that are close to genes or groups of genes that may control the disease resistant and economically important traits. Next, it will be necessary to determine associations between specific markers and important quantitative traits (resistance to specific diseases and pathogens, leanness, tenderness).

"Development and implementation of this technology will result in a higher quality, safer and healthier food supply for consumers," said Espy. "Farmers and ranchers will produce animals more efficiently with an increased breeding value and more resistance to disease and insects. This will help protect the environment because it lessens the need for using pesticides and other chemicals."

"This research will help American agriculture remain on the cutting edge of science and technology and stay competitive in world markets. Currently, the European community and other countries have major commitments to genome research for agriculture. Development of genome maps at USDA and subsequent technology will allow the American farmer to remain highly competitive internationally."

In addition to the genetic maps, ARS scientists have also developed a interactive database which can be used by scientists at federal, state and commercial research facilities to correlate mapping data with desirable traits. The ARS will provide on-line access to the genome maps and database beginning in March 1994.



Release No. 0028.94
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SAFE COOKING AND HANDLING LABELS FOR MEAT AND POULTRY ARE ON TRACK

WASHINGTON, Jan. 11--The comment period for safe handling and cooking instructions for raw meat and poultry products ended Dec. 20 and publication of the final rule is expected soon.

"Washington has debated for the past 20 years whether to mandate safe cooking and handling labels on raw meat and poultry products," said Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy. "That's 20 years during which family after family haven't had the advantage of seeing on meat and poultry products an important educational message that could help to save a life. Though the information on the label is basic, studies clearly show that the American consumer lacks fundamental knowledge about safe handling and cooking of meat and poultry products.

"As we move our meat and poultry inspection systems to science-based systems and as we learn how to better detect harmful bacteria in the meat and poultry supply, we must keep the consumer aware about safe cooking and handling."

Espy said that even with implementation of the label USDA is still changing and improving the current meat and poultry inspection system which he has criticized for being based on technology from the 1930's, rather than the 1990's.

"America, without a doubt, continues to have the safest and most whole-some food in the world," Espy said. "However, we have an obligation to keep improving our already high standards and believe that everyone, including the users of food and food products, has a role to play."

The proposed labels and other safe handling information were to be mandated nationwide on Oct. 15 but a request from four industry groups for an injunction was granted on Oct. 14 by U.S. District Judge James R. Nowlin in Austin, Texas. Nowlin stated that there was no cause for an expedited rule-making process since E.coli outbreaks are isolated and separate. The judge stated that he believed the outbreaks of food poisoning attributed to E. coli occurred primarily in fast food chains and were isolated geographically.

The USDA had argued that illnesses and deaths attributed to E. coli, as well as other pathogens such as salmonella, have occurred all across the nation and have not been limited to fast food chains. Since the Oct. 14 injunction, cases have been reported in several states including Texas.

The plaintiffs in the case were the National American Wholesale Grocers' Association\ International Foodservice Distributors Association, the National Grocers Association and the Texas Food Industry Association. They had argued that the original 30-day comment period for the labels was too short. The USDA had argued that outbreaks around the country warranted an expedited rule-making procedure that included a 30-day comment period. During the comment period, USDA received more than 350 comments.

The new proposed rule, which was published Nov. 4 in the Federal Register, included a 45-day comment period. About 50 comments were submitted, many duplicating suggestions from the first comment period.

Espy said he decided to proceed administratively, rather than appealing the decision of the court "so the labels could be on products as soon as possible, rather than being tied up in the courts for months."

The safe handling and cooking labels currently are being attached voluntarily to meat and poultry products while the USDA moves forward with the administrative process to mandate them. Espy has called for voluntary compliance since the Oct. 14 injunction and has applauded those companies who are complying without the mandate.

The proposed label notes that some food products may contain bacteria that can cause an illness if mishandled or cooked improperly. The proposed label further notes that raw meat and poultry should be: refrigerated or frozen and thawed in a refrigerator or microwave; kept separate from other foods and working surfaces, while hands and utensils should be washed after touching raw meats; cooked thoroughly; and refrigerated immediately or discarded.

A similar message was the theme of a radio public service announcement produced by USDA featuring the parents of a child who had died due to E. coli 0157:H7 last year in Washington State. The public service announcement was sent to 1,000 radio stations around the nation.

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Release No. 0029.94
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SECRETARY ESPY NAMES IOWA FARMER AS CHIEF OF SOIL CONSERVATION SERVICE

WASHINGTON, Jan. 10--Secretary of Agriculture Mike Espy today named Paul W. Johnson, an Iowa farmer well known for his conservation leadership nationally and in Iowa as a member of the State Legislature, as Chief of the Soil Conservation Service.

"This Department has a mission to strengthen natural resource protection. Paul Johnson understands these issues and he understands our customers' concerns. He'll bring broad experience and visionary leadership to our team," Espy said.

The Soil Conservation Service works directly with agricultural producers to help them implement soil conservation techniques, and with a broad array of state and local groups to sustain and enhance environmental quality.

"The Soil Conservation Service will be moving ahead using an ecosystem approach to protecting and enhancing our natural resources," said James R. Lyons, Assistant Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment. "Paul's expertise is what we need, especially as we look ahead to the 1995 Farm Bill and the reauthorization of the nation's Clean Water Act. He'll bring a balanced perspective to the debate."

"One of the most important challenges of our time is to learn to live in harmony with the land," Johnson said. "No group has been more involved with making this happen over the years than the Soil Conservation Service. I look forward to being part of that proud tradition."

Johnson has been actively involved in conservation issues since he started farming in 1974. He has a dairy, sheep, grain, and Christmas tree farm in Decorah in northeast Iowa. He has served as assistant commissioner for his local soil conservation district.

As a representative in the Iowa General Assembly from 1984 to 1990, he wrote several major pieces of environmental legislation. He was a major architect of Iowa's Groundwater Protection Act, a model used nationwide for its emphasis on research, education, and voluntary approaches to water quality.

Other significant legislation by Johnson includes the Iowa Resource Enhancement and Protection program (REAP), the Iowa Energy Efficiency Act, and the Iowa Integrated Farm Management Program.

He also serves on the Board of Agriculture of the National Academy of Sciences and has been involved in major studies in agriculture, forestry, and conservation.

Johnson, 52, received his B.S. and M.S. in forestry from the University of Michigan and has completed most of the work there for a Ph.D. in forestry. He taught forestry in Ghana for two years and has been visiting professor of environmental policy at Luther College.

He and his wife, Patricia Joslyn Johnson, have three grown children.

Espy also announced the appointment of Pearlie S. Reed as associate chief of SCS. Reed, a 25-year career employee of SCS, has served as state conservationist in California and Maryland and is a 1993 USDA Honor Award recipient. He is a native of Arkansas. He succeeds Galen Bridge, who retired after a 36-year career with SCS.



Release No. 0030.94

USDA REVISES PUBLIC LAW 480 TITLE I ALLOCATIONS FOR FISCAL 1994

WASHINGTON, Jan. 11--The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced revised country and commodity allocations for the second quarter of fiscal 1994 under Title I of the Food for Peace Program and the Food for Progress program funded under Title I appropriations.

Christopher E. Goldthwait, General Sales Manager for USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, said \$326.5 million has been allocated for commodity loans and grants. An additional \$108.9 million is being held in reserve to fund unforeseen needs during the fiscal year. These allocations do not necessarily represent final U.S. commitments with participating governments, Goldthwait said, because situations can develop that can cause a change in country and commodity allocations during the fiscal year.

Since the September announcement of fiscal year 1994 allocations (USDA news release 0808.93), an allocation has been added for Suriname, and funds previously allocated to Egypt have been returned to the unallocated reserve. Title I funds have been designated for transfer to the Food for Progress Program for the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Georgia, and Kyrgyzstan.

Title I of the Food for Peace Program (Public Law 480) is a concession-al sales program to promote exports of agricultural commodities from the United States and to foster broad-based sustainable development in recipient countries. The program provides export financing over payment periods of 10 to 30 years, grace periods on payments of principal of up to seven years, and low interest rates.

Countries eligible for the Title I program are those developing countries experiencing a shortage of foreign exchange earnings and having difficulty meeting all of their food needs through commercial channels. The factors that determine priorities for country allocations include food needs, potential for becoming a commercial U.S. market and improvement of food security through agricultural projects and economic measures. The allocations take into account changing economic and foreign policy situations, market development opportunities, existence of adequate storage facilities and possible disincentives to local production.

For further information contact: Mary Chambliss, FAS, USDA, (202) 720-3573: The list of country and commodity allocations follows.

**Second Quarter FY 1994 Public Law 480 Title I
Country and Commodity Allocations**

Country	\$Mil Total (Mil \$)	Undesignated (Mil \$)	Wheat (----1,000 Metric Tons---)	Rice
Belarus	10.0	--	48.7	--
Bulgaria	10.0	--	--	--
Costa Rica	5.0	--	30.4	--
Cote d'Ivoire	10.0	--	--	23.0
Croatia	10.0	--	--	--
Dominican Rep.	5.0	--	30.4	--
El Salvador	20.0	--	54.8	--
Guatemala	15.0	--	91.3	--
Jamaica	20.0	--	--	25.3
Jordan	15.0	--	91.3	--
Latvia	10.0	--	--	--
Lithuania	10.0	--	--	--
Moldova	10.0	--	--	--
Morocco	15.0	--	45.7	--
Pakistan	20.0	--	--	--
Philippines	15.0	--	--	--
Poland	5.0	--	--	--
Romania	10.0	--	--	--
Sri Lanka	5.0	--	30.4	--
Suriname	5.5	--	32.0	--
Tajikistan	10.0	--	51.1	--
Turkmenistan	10.0	--	51.8	--
Yemen	10.0	--	30.4	11.5
Total	255.5	0	588.3	59.8

Continued: P.L. 480 Title I Allocations, 2nd Quarter Fiscal 1994

Country	Feed Grains	Veg.Oil	Oilseeds/ Meal a/		Tallow	Cotton
(-----1,000 Metric Tons-----)						
Belarus	--	--	--	--	--	--
Bulgaria	80.7	--	--	--	--	--
Costa Rica	--	--	--	--	--	--
Cote d'Ivoire	--	--	--	--	--	--
Croatia	--	--	20.7	--	16.3	
Dominican Rep.	--	--	--	--	--	--
El Salvador	40.4	--	--	16.2	--	
Guatemala	--	--	--	--	--	--
Jamaica	72.6	--	--	--	--	--
Jordan	--	--	--	--	--	--
Latvia	44.4	--	9.5	--	--	
Lithuania	--	--	36.0	--	--	--
Moldova	58.1	--	--	--	--	--
Morocco	--	11.3	--	--	--	--
Pakistan	--	30.2	--	--	--	--
Philippines	--	--	62.0	--	--	
Poland	--	--	--	--	16.3	
Romania	--	--	38.1	--	--	--
Sri Lanka	--	--	--	--	--	--
Tajikistan	--	--	--	--	--	--
Turkmenistan	--	--	--	--	--	--
Yemen	--	--	--	--	--	--
Total	296.2	41.5	166.3	16.2	32.6	

Food for Progress Program FY 1994

Country (Mil \$)	Total	Wheat	Feed Grains	Veg. Oil
(-----1,000 Metric Tons-----)				
Albania	15.0	23.7	25.8	3.2
Armenia	20.0	97.4	--	--
Georgia	20.0	103.5	--	--
Kyrgyzstan	16.0	60.9	--	--
	-----	-----	-----	-----
	71.0	285.5	25.8	3.2

Funding Summary (\$ Million) b/

	Loan Level	Budget Authority
Allocated Loans	326.5	257.7
Ocean Freight Financing	15.0	13.7
Unallocated Reserve	108.9	75.5
Total Availability c/	450.4	346.9

a/ Category includes oilseeds and oilseed meal. Quantities for Latvia and Romania are oilseeds, all other country allocations are oilseed meal.

b/ The funding summary helps explain revised funding procedures for federal credit programs authorized by the Budget Enforcement Act of 1990, Title XIII of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1990. These procedures, known as credit reform, require that budget authority for direct credit programs such as Title I represent the subsidy cost of the program. Subsidy costs are estimated based on the repayment terms, interest subsidies, and estimated risk of defaults. The Title I budget now includes two funding limitations the \$450.4 million available for loans and the \$346.9 million available for budget authority to cover the estimated subsidy cost of the program. Neither limitation can be exceeded.



Release No. 0032.94
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USDA PROPOSES RULE FOR DOMESTIC TOBACCO CONTENT FOR CIGARETTES

WASHINGTON, Jan. 11--The U.S. Department of Agriculture is seeking public comment on a proposed rule to implement the domestic tobacco content provisions of the Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1993.

The statute imposes a 75 percent domestic tobacco content requirement on cigarettes made in the United States. The proposed rule would require that each domestic cigarette manufacturer who produces and sells more than 1 percent of the cigarettes produced and sold domestically will be required to annually certify, beginning with 1994 calendar year production, the quantity and percentage of domestic tobacco used.

Manufacturers failing to comply with the domestic content requirement would be subject to a domestic marketing assessment and would be required to purchase certain quantities of loan stock burley and flue-cured tobacco. The domestic marketing assessment rate would be based on the difference between the prices received by domestic producers of burley and flue-cured tobacco and prices for imported tobacco. The domestic marketing assessment itself and required purchases of loan stocks of tobacco would be based on the quantity of imported tobacco that exceeded the allowable 25 percent limit.

The proposed rule appears in today's Federal Register. Comments must be received by Feb. 10 to be assured of consideration and should be sent to: Director, Tobacco and Peanuts Division, USDA/ASCS, P.O. Box 2415, Washington, D.C. 20013-2415. Comments will be available for public inspection in Room 5750 of USDA's South Building during normal business hours.



Release No. 0033.94

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USDA PROPOSES TO EXTEND BRUCELLOSIS INDEMNITY COMPENSATION

WASHINGTON, Jan. 12 -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture has proposed to extend indemnity compensation to include brucellosis-exposed cattle or bison that were sold or traded from any herd later found infected with that bacterial disease.

"This additional indemnity would give herd owners sufficient incentive to destroy their exposed animals in a timely manner," said Billy G. Johnson, deputy administrator for veterinary services in USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

"The continued presence of brucellosis in a herd seriously threatens the health of animals in that herd and increases the risk of the disease spreading to other herds," Johnson said. "The prompt destruction of all brucellosis-affected cattle or bison is critical for the overall success of brucellosis eradication efforts in the United States."

Under current practice, APHIS traces the movement of all animals sold or traded from a herd found to be affected with brucellosis to the new owners. The new owners are given the option of destroying the brucellosis-exposed animals without indemnity or quarantining the exposed animals or the entire herd for six months.

Johnson said quarantining is a lengthy and expensive process for both the livestock owner and the federal government. Until all brucellosis-infected animals are eliminated from a quarantined herd, the owner cannot sell or move any animals except to slaughter and the federal government must pay for testing the animals periodically.

Brucellosis, a disease that causes abortions and lowered milk production in cows, is transmissible to humans as undulant fever. In humans, the disease causes severe flu-like symptoms that can last for months or years, if left untreated. Humans can become infected with brucellosis through contact with carcasses during slaughter or by handling infected cows, particularly at calving time.

This proposed rule was published in the Federal Register Dec. 28.

To submit comments, send an original and three copies of written comments referring to Docket No. 93-023-1 on or before Jan. 27 to Chief, Regulatory Analysis and Development, Policy and Program Development, APHIS, USDA, Room 804 Federal Building, 6505 Belcrest Road, Hyattsville, MD 20782. Comments once received may be inspected at USDA, Room 1141, South Building, 14th Street and Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C., between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday, except holidays. Persons wishing to inspect comments are encouraged to call ahead on (202) 690-2817 to facilitate entry into the comment reading room.

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Release No. 0034.94

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USDA ADOPTING NEW STRATEGY FOR MEDFLY ERADICATION

WASHINGTON, Jan. 13--The U.S. Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the California Department of Food and Agriculture, is shifting its eradication strategy for the Mediterranean fruit fly outbreak in California to a more area-wide approach.

"An area-wide strategy of sterile Medfly release proposed by an international team of scientists is the best approach to achieving eradication," said Lonnie J. King, acting administrator for USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

In contrast to the current program which focuses eradication activities around specific sites, the new approach involves the continuous release of sterile Medflies over approximately 1,500 square miles of the Los Angeles Basin for 2 years. About 720 million sterile flies would be released per week. Sterile flies are released to mate with wild flies and breed the infestation out of existence. Trapping and regulatory work would be reduced.

Judicious use of aerial applications will also be used to complement the area-wide program. "Aerial treatments, if necessary, would only occur in areas where commercial fruit production exists," King said.

The Medfly is one of the world's most destructive pests of more than 200 kinds of fruits and vegetables. Heavy infestations can cause complete crop loss. Losses of 25 to 50 percent are not uncommon.

Establishment of Medfly in the United States could also result in the loss of export markets. King said that the new strategy will assure our trading partners that we continue to take appropriate actions to deal with this serious pest.



Release No. 0037.94
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USDA'S NATIONAL ORGANIC STANDARDS BOARD TO MEET FROM JAN. 30 TO FEB. 2

WASHINGTON, Jan. 13--The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) is scheduled to meet from Jan. 30 to Feb. 2.

The main focus of the meeting is to discuss issues under consideration by the NOSB's six working committees--Crops Standards; Processing, Labeling and Packaging; Livestock Standards; Accreditation; National Materials List; and International Issues. All sessions are to be held at the Westpark Hotel, 1900 N. Fort Meyer Drive, Rosslyn, Va.

Prior to the full board meeting, the Livestock Standards Committee is scheduled to convene Jan. 29 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. to discuss its positions on such topics as processing and slaughter, parasiticide and antibiotic practices.

Topics to be covered by the full board include: processing standards and processing materials needed for the National List of Approved and Prohibited Substances; development of the accreditation requirements and criteria for peer review panel; material inputs for organic crop production; antibiotics and parasiticide position papers; and import requirements for organic products.

The NOSB will also discuss procedures for submitting its recommendations to the secretary of agriculture. Based on the board's recommendations, USDA will develop national regulations governing organic standards.

All meetings will be open to the public. A public input session is scheduled to be held Jan. 31 from 9 a.m. to noon.

Notice of the meeting was published in the Jan. 3 Federal Register. Individuals or organizations wishing to provide oral or written comments on organic issues should contact Dr. Harold S. Ricker, Staff Director, NOSB, Transportation and Marketing Division, Agricultural Marketing Service, USDA, Room 4006-S, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456; telephone (202) 720-2704.



Release No. 0039.94

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USDA SEEKS PARTICIPANTS FOR ROUND TABLE ON HAZARD ANALYSIS AND CRITICAL CONTROL POINT SYSTEMS

WASHINGTON, Jan. 13--The U.S. Department of Agriculture is inviting participants to a round table on how to best implement a process control system in meat and poultry plants, also known as the Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point System (HACCP).

The round table on HACCP will be held in about 60 days after the publication of the notice in the Jan. 11 Federal Register. The session will be open to the public. A date, time and place will be announced soon.

"We have chosen this type of forum because it will allow open and frank discussion of all issues relative to a HACCP system," said Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy. "HACCP is universally known as a process control system that improves food safety. The round table will help us review all aspects of issues concerning the use of this system in meat and poultry plants.

"A HACCP system is one of several initiatives we are undertaking to improve inspection and the safety of the nation's meat and poultry supply. We hope HACCP will complement our current system."

Persons interested in participating in the round table have until Jan. 25 to contact Mark Manis, director, Import Inspection Division, International Programs, Food Safety and Inspection, USDA, Room 0114, South Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250; phone (202) 720-2925.

A list of interested participants by constituent group categories will be compiled and members in those groups will select representatives for the round-table discussion.

Participants in the round table will include five for the meat and poultry industry, consumer groups and scientists and professional scientific organizations; four for producers and farmers groups; three for FSIS employees and their representatives and federal, state and local governments; and two for public health officials, including medical doctors.

The process also allows for any person who believes their interest is not represented by the identified constituent categories to request participation in the round table.

The participants of each constituent category will select one representative to serve on a steering committee for the meeting.

The steering committee will determine issues for discussion, process for developing issue papers prior to the round table, timeframes, meeting schedule, round-table discussion procedures and any other matter which would ensure an effective and full discussion.

Issue papers prepared for the meeting will be publicly available through the FSIS Hearing Clerk, room 3171, South Building, Food Safety and Inspection Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250.



Release No. 0040.94
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USDA PLANS PUBLIC VETERINARY BIOLOGICS MEETING FOR APRIL 12-13

WASHINGTON, Jan. 14--The U.S. Department of Agriculture will hold its fifth annual veterinary biologics meeting on April 12-13 in Ames, Iowa, to discuss regulatory and policy issues related to quality control of veterinary biologics.

Rescheduled from last August because of flooding in Iowa, the meeting will be held in the Scheman Building, Iowa State Center, Ames, Iowa, from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. each day.

"The meeting offers an opportunity for manufacturers and other interested persons to discuss with us the manufacture, distribution and use of animal vaccines and other veterinary biologics," said John Payne, acting director for biotechnology, biologics, and environmental protection in USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

The agenda includes the following topics:

- Program activity updates;
- Duration of immunity of veterinary biologics;
- Good laboratory practices;
- Public perceptions of licensed biologics;
- Computer validation as it relates to electronic information transfers;
- Endotoxin testing by [Limulus] amebocyte lysate assay; and,
- The influence of label claims, testing and regulation of new or different pathogenic strains.

A portion of the meeting will be set aside for open discussions.

Notice announcing the meeting was published in the Dec. 21 Federal Register.



Release No. 0041.94
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USDA REORGANIZATION/REFORM RESULTS IN MAJOR SAVINGS THE FIRST YEAR

WASHINGTON, Jan. 14--Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy's initial steps to reorganize the U.S. Department of Agriculture resulted in millions of dollars in savings the first year, including \$146 million through staff reductions.

Following his swearing-in Jan. 22, 1993, Espy implemented a hiring freeze at virtually every level of USDA. This action resulted in a federal employment reduction of 2,700 staff years and a savings of about \$146 million to the American taxpayer in 1993.

Legislation which authorizes a reorganization plan for the department has already had hearings in the House of Representatives and the Senate, and is scheduled for markup in the House in early February. Congressional approval of this plan would enable the department to reduce its federal work-force by an additional 7,500 staff years and its non-federal county employment by more than 1,000 staff years at an estimated savings of \$1.3 billion in personnel costs through 1998. Staff reductions at headquarters alone are projected to save \$237 million over the next five years. In addition, other streamlining measures including cutbacks throughout USDA in travel, consulting fees and other services will save an estimated \$1 billion.

"The reorganization underway at the U.S. Department of Agriculture is an example of this administration's commitment to make the federal government more efficient and save tax dollars, while providing better service to the American farmer and consumer," said Espy.

The USDA was the first department to submit reorganization legislation to Congress last fall. That action was followed by joint appearances by the secretary and deputy secretary as lead witnesses before the House and Senate Committees on Agriculture. Currently, the House is concluding a series of field hearings on USDA reorganization. Members will review the secretary's proposal to streamline the Washington headquarters by reducing the number of agencies and his proposal to close or consolidate about 1,200 field offices nationwide.

•Reorganization at USDA has also meant approximately \$6.7 million in savings through the secretary's mandate to reform the bonus system and hundreds of thousands of dollars in savings through reform of cash awards and ceremonies.

•In November, Espy also submitted legislation to reform the Rural Electrification Administration as called for by the president in his State of the Union Address last year. The legislation represents nearly \$90 million in savings in FY 1994 by increasing the interest rate USDA charges electric and telephone borrowers for REA loans.

•In response to the administration's recommendations, last fall Congress enacted legislation that phased out the wool and mohair price support program and cut funding to the honey price support program for FY 1994. Reforming these programs will mean an estimated savings of \$726 million over the next five years.

•Reducing the lease cost of the motor fleet will provide \$27,000 per year in savings.

•Streamlining the telephone and computer network at USDA headquarters will provide \$389,000 in savings through FY 1994.

•Cutting the Yearbook of Agriculture will provide \$500,000 in savings starting in FY 1994; additional savings will result from the elimination of other USDA publications.

"Early passage of the proposed reorganization legislation is extremely important to the achievement of our long-term goals," said Espy. "This is because many of our most fundamental changes, such as the creation of a Farm Service Agency (the one-stop shop approach) cannot be implemented without new legislation. As we enter a new year, I recommit the USDA team to continue the hard work and cooperative effort with the Congress to bring sweeping change to this department."



Release No. 0044.94

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RURAL AREAS TO BENEFIT FROM PRESIDENT'S COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION PROGRAM

(Espy will designate three rural Empowerment Zones and 30 rural Enterprise Communities)

WASHINGTON, Jan. 17 -- Agriculture Secretary Mike Espy today joined President Clinton at the White House to launch the application process for the administration's Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities (EZ/EC) revitalization program.

"President Clinton is committed to making our communities vibrant with job opportunities for all," said Espy. "We know that America works when Americans work. The Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities will bring together all segments in an area--from government officials, to business leaders, to church leaders and to nonprofit organizers. All will have the common goal of revitalizing their communities and creating jobs."

"Because this program is built around strategic planning development by rural communities, it will help them achieve their own vision for the kind of community they want to have in the 21st Century."

Three Empowerment Zones and 30 Enterprise Communities will be designated specifically for rural areas after a competitive application process. The rural designations will be made by Espy. The six Empowerment Zones and 65 Enterprise Community designations for urban areas will be made by Housing and Urban Development Secretary Henry G. Cisneros.

All designations will be made in consultation with the President's Community Enterprise Board, comprised of Cabinet members and advisors to the President on domestic issues. The board is chaired by Vice President Gore.

Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities will receive special consideration for various federal programs and other assistance, including social service block grants, new tax exempt Facility Bonds, tax breaks for employment, and other special consideration for existing federal programs.

The difference in the benefits for Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities is that Empowerment Zones will qualify for tax credits for each worker who resides in the zones; Section 179 expending is increased; and grants are substantially larger.

One special feature in the EZ/EC program will benefit the areas that apply but are not designated. Communities that apply but are not chosen will qualify for assistance in seeking regulation waivers for federal programs and if there is a Community Development Corporation within the jurisdiction, that corporation can qualify to receive tax preferred contributions from donors. Eight CDC's in rural areas will be selected under this separate program.

To apply for a designation under the EZ/EC program, comprehensive strategic plans must be submitted. The plans must emphasize four principles: 1. Economic opportunity, including job creation; 2. Community development, including comprehensive approaches to access to affordable housing, human services, economic development, public safety and a clean environment; 3. Community partnership, involving participation of all segments of the community; and 4. Strategic vision for change, identifying clear goals for the community.

Poverty, unemployment and other need factors will be critical in determining eligibility but play a less significant role than the four key principles.

"This is not government as usual," said Under Secretary of Agriculture Bob Nash, who helped to create and who will oversee the program at USDA. "The development program provides a means for rural towns and regions to work together to develop their own plans to overcome poverty, unemployment and other social problems.

"President Clinton's EZ/EC program is one more way in which we are reinventing the federal government to be more responsive to community concerns."

Applications for the EZ/EC program will require communities to submit very few forms. Instead, the key will be a comprehensive development plan that involves community residents, local and state governments, nonprofit and private sector groups and organizations, regional planning agencies, and other private and public entities.

In the spirit of Vice President Gore's goal to make government and information more accessible to Americans all across the nation, USDA will use the Internet Mail System to receive questions and inquiries for more information on the EZ/EC program. Rural and urban communities may receive information or applications from Internet by sending a message to info@ezec.usda.gov.

People interested in receiving a copy of an application or getting more details about the program should contact a state office of the Farmers Home Administration or call 202-690-1045. The deadline to apply will be 4 p.m. EDT, Thursday, June 30. Applications may be mailed or hand-delivered. Rural applications should be mailed to: USDA, Rural Development Administration, EZ/EC Team, Room 5405, 14th and Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-3200.

Interested individuals or groups are encouraged to attend one of the workshops on the application process being held around the country. The rural workshops will be held in Charleston, W.Va., Feb. 8; Lumberton, N.C., Feb. 9; McAllen, Texas, Feb. 11; Greenville, Miss., Feb. 14; Las Vegas, N.M., Feb. 17; Atlanta, Ga., Feb. 23; and Kansas City, Mo., Feb. 28. For information about the workshops, call 1-800-645-4712 (fax 806-894-0340).



Program Announcements-

Release No. 0031.94

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USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET RICE PRICES, MARKETING CERTIFICATE RATES

WASHINGTON, Jan. 11--Under Secretary of Agriculture Eugene Moos today announced the prevailing world market prices of milled rice, loan rate basis, as follows:

--long grain whole kernels:	11.77 cents per pound
--medium grain whole kernels:	11.05 cents per pound
--short grain whole kernels:	10.97 cents per pound
--broken kernels:	5.88 cents per pound

Based upon these milled rice world market prices, loan deficiency payment rates, gains from repaying price support loans at the world market price, and marketing certificate rates are zero.

These announced prices are effective today at 3 p.m. EST. The next scheduled price announcement will be made Jan. 18 at 3 p.m. EST.



Release No. 0035.94

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USDA DECLARES BELGIUM FREE OF TWO DESTRUCTIVE LIVESTOCK DISEASES

WASHINGTON, Jan. 13--The U.S. Department of Agriculture today declared Belgium free of foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) and rinderpest, two communicable and destructive livestock diseases.

This action allows fresh, chilled and frozen meats and dairy products from ruminant animals to be imported into the United States from Belgium under restrictions. However, because there is limited U.S. demand to import these products from Belgium, this change is not expected to have a major impact on current trade patterns.

Based on the most recent information available at the time of an analysis conducted by USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the total value of all U.S. ruminant imports in 1991 was \$953.2 million. However, no ruminants were imported from Belgium or any other part of Western Europe that year. Five U.S. import companies have expressed interest in importing bovine embryos and semen from Belgium. These are animal products that were previously prohibited because of the disease quarantine.

APHIS will consider declaring a country free of FMD and rinderpest if no cases of the diseases are reported or no animals are vaccinated for the disease for at least one year. Belgium has not had a case of rinderpest, a viral disease of cattle and bison, since 1920. Consequently, there has not been a vaccination program in Belgium for that disease for over 50 years. Vaccinations for FMD, a highly infectious disease of cattle and other clovenhoofed animals, ended in that country in 1991. The last FMD outbreak there was in 1976.

APHIS's National Center for Import and Export reviewed the application and documentation supplied by the Belgian government. A team of APHIS officials also traveled to Belgium to evaluate the capability of the country's veterinary services, laboratory and diagnostic procedures, vaccination practices and enforcement of animal health regulations. This review confirmed that Belgium has eradicated FMD. Under APHIS's authority, Belgium must have eradicated FMD in order to be declared free of rinderpest.

This final rule is scheduled for publication in the Jan. 14 Federal Register and will be effective on Jan. 31.



Release No. 0036.94
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USDA PUBLISHES NEW MOISTURE METER CHARTS

WASHINGTON, Jan. 13--The U.S. Department of Agriculture has published three revised moisture meter conversion charts for the Motomco Model 919 Moisture Meter.

The revisions, published by USDA's Federal Grain Inspection Service, correct system differences that were found during the agency's routine annual review of the charts.

New moisture meter charts were made effective on Jan. 1, 1994, for Long Grain Brown rice (Chart BR-1-94), Short Grain Brown rice (Chart BR-3-94), and Brewers Milled rice (parboiled) (Chart R-17-94). The new charts are to be used for all official inspections performed on or after the implementation date.

The Motomco Model 919 Moisture Meter is the approved instrument for official rice moisture testing.

Technical contact: James Rampton, (816) 891-0450.



USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET PRICE AND USER MARKETING CERTIFICATE PAYMENT RATE FOR UPLAND COTTON

WASHINGTON, Jan. 13--Grant Buntrock, executive vice president of USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation, today announced the prevailing world market price, adjusted to U.S. quality and location (adjusted world price or AWP), for Strict Low Middling (SLM) 1-1/16 inch (leaf grade 4, micronaire 3.5-3.6 and 4.3-4.9, strength 24-25 grams per tex) upland cotton (base quality), and the coarse count adjustment (CCA) in effect from 5:00 p.m. today through 3:59 p.m. Thursday, Jan. 20. The user marketing certificate payment rate announced today is in effect from 12:01 a.m. Friday, Jan. 14 through midnight Thursday, Jan. 20.

The Agricultural Act of 1949, as amended, provides that the AWP may be further adjusted if: (a) the AWP is less than 115 percent of the current crop year loan rate for base quality upland cotton, and (b) the Friday through Thursday average price quotation for the lowest-priced U.S. growth as quoted for Middling (M) 1-3/32 inch cotton, C.I.F. northern Europe (USNE price) exceeds the Northern Europe (NE) price. The maximum allowable adjustment is the difference between the USNE price and the NE price.

A further adjustment to this week's calculated AWP may be made in accordance with this provision. The calculated AWP is just over 100 percent of the 1993 upland cotton base quality loan rate, and the USNE price exceeds the NE price by 2.90 cents per pound. Following are the relevant calculations:

I.	Calculated AWP	52.38 cents per pound
	1993 Base Loan Rate	52.35 cents per pound
	AWP as a Percent of Loan Rate	100.06
II.	USNE Price	69.00 cents per pound
	NE Price	<u>- 66.10</u> cents per pound
	Maximum Adjustment Allowed	2.90 cents per pound

Based on a consideration of the U.S. share of world exports, the current level of cotton export sales and cotton export shipments, and other relevant data, no further adjustment to this week's calculated AWP will be made.

This week's AWP and coarse count adjustment are determined as follows:

Adjusted World Price

NE Price	66.10
Adjustments:	
Avg. U.S. spot market location	11.91
SLM 1-1/16 inch cotton	1.50
Avg. U.S. location	0.31
Sum of Adjustments	<u>- 13.72</u>
Calculated AWP	52.38
Further AWP adjustment	<u>- 0</u>
ADJUSTED WORLD PRICE	52.38 cents/1b.

Coarse Count Adjustment

NE Price	66.10
NE Coarse Count Price	<u>- 62.17</u>
	3.93
Adjustment to SLM 1-1/32 inch cotton	<u>- 3.20</u>
COARSE COUNT ADJUSTMENT	0.73 cents/lb.

Because the AWP is above 52.35 cents per pound, the base quality loan rate for both the 1992 and 1993 marketing years, the loan repayment rate during this period is equal to the loan rate, adjusted for the specific quality and location plus applicable interest and storage charges. The AWP will continue to be used to determine the value of upland cotton that is obtained in exchange for commodity certificates.

Because the AWP is above the 1993-crop loan rate, loan deficiency payments are not available during this period.

The USNE price has exceeded the NE price by more than 1.25 cents per pound for four consecutive weeks and the AWP has not exceeded 130 percent of the 1993 crop year base quality loan rate in any week of the 4-week period. As a result, the user marketing certificate payment rate is 1.65 cents per pound. This rate is applicable during the Friday through Thursday period for bales opened by domestic users and for cotton contracts entered into by exporters for delivery prior to Sept. 30, 1994. Relevant data are summarized below:

Week	Period Ending	For the		User Marketing	
		Friday through		Certificate	
		Thursday	USNE Price	NE Price	Payment Rate
			cents/lb
1	Dec. 23, 1993		63.50	60.62	1.63
2	Dec. 30, 1993		65.50	62.00	2.25
3	Jan. 6, 1993		66.75	63.75	1.75
4	Jan. 13, 1994		69.00	66.10	1.65

Next week's AWP, CCA and user marketing certificate payment rate will be announced on Thursday, Jan. 20, at 5 p.m.



